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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on how students across the nation, of three different ages--9, 13, and 17--revise their own writing. The report is based on detailed analyses of two writing assignments: the first required 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds to write and revise a school report about the moon, and the second required 17-year-olds to write and revise a letter of complaint in response to a practical, reasonably complex situation. Approximately 2,500 individuals at each age level responded to one of these exercises. The interaction of such variables as group differences, sex, race, parental education, community type, and region is summarized. Several visual displays of the data obtained are included. (KS)

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NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

WRITE/REWRITE:

AN ASSESSMENT OF REVISION SKILLS

Selected Results From the Second
National Assessment of Writing

Writing Report No. 05-W-04

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FOREWORD

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an information-gathering project that surveys the educational attainments of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults (ages 26-35) in 10 learning areas: art, career and occupational development, citizenship, literature, mathematics, music, reading, science, social studies and writing. Different learning areas are periodically reassessed in order to measure educational change.

Each assessment is the product of several years' work by a great many educators, scholars and lay persons from all over the country. Initially, these people design objectives for each area, proposing specific goals that they feel Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. After careful reviews, these objectives are then given to exercise (item) writers, whose task it is to create measurement tools appropriate to the objectives.

When the exercises have passed extensive reviews by subject-matter specialists, lay persons and measurement experts, they are administered to probability samples from various age levels. The people who comprise these samples are chosen in such a way that the results of their assessment can be generalized to an entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 9-year-olds on a given exercise, we can generalize about the probable performance of all 9-year-olds in the nation.

National Assessment also publishes a general information yearbook that describes all major aspects of the Assessment's operation. The reader who desires more detailed information about how NAEP defines its groups, prepares and scores its exercises, designs its samples, and analyzes and reports its results should consult the *General Information Yearbook.*[1] Complete data on all writing exercises can be found in the writing statistical report.[2]

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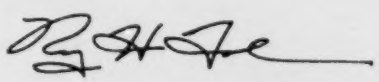
[1] *General Information Yearbook, Report 03/04-GIY* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974).

[2] *Writing Technical Report: Exercise Volume, Report 05-W-20* (forthcoming).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have made substantial contributions to the two writing assessments and to the writing study discussed in this report. Not the least of those to be gratefully acknowledged are the administrators, teachers and students who cooperated so generously in the assessment. Particular thanks go to John Maxwell of the National Council of Teachers of English for his work in developing the assessment of revision skills; the scoring staff at the Measurement Research Center (Iowa City, Iowa) for their tireless application of the system to thousands of student essays; and Ina Mullis, the National Assessment overseer of the writing assessment.

The actual preparation of this report was a collaborative effort of the National Assessment staff. Special thanks go to Bill Ankeny, Charlotte Ramlow and Harlan Bowles for data processing support; Valerie Daniels and Ava Powell for technical proofreading; and Marci Reser and Jessica Grant for production. Technical analysis for this report was planned and supervised by Ina Mullis; the report was written by Frank Rivas.



Roy H. Forbes
Project Director

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Writing is recognized as integral to the core curriculum, but writing is also essentially different from other subjects in the curriculum. It is primarily a skill, rather than a body of information that an individual either knows or does not know. Skill in writing develops not from memorization, but through a much more complex process that includes developing sensitivity to logical and linguistic patterns, constructing paradigms of acceptable patterns and learning to fit expressions into those paradigms. The practice involves both experimenting with different types of expression and revising the same expression, either mentally or mechanically, until one achieves a close fit.

The exercises designed to assess writing objectives, developed by the National Assessment staff and many educators in the field of English and composition, measure a variety of writing skills from mechanics to rewriting. The ability to revise adequately one's own work — the focus of this report — is important for two reasons. First, rewriting skills are often considered to be the essence of good writing. All of us can express ourselves in some form, however ambiguous or inappropriate, but a good writer knows how to revise such preliminary statements so that they become less ambiguous and more appropriate. Second, how an individual revises his work allows an observer to understand what paradigms of good writing he is working toward. Does revision mean improving the appearance or legibility of one's writing; does it mean making mechanical changes, as in spelling, punctuation, capitalization; or does it mean making grammatical changes? Does revision mean adding information or clarifying transitions between ideas or facts already presented? Does revision mean changing the style or tone of a passage? Does revision involve rearranging or reorganizing the elements so that they are easier for the potential audience to understand?

This report attempts to ascertain how 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds make revisions of their own writing. The entire report is based on

detailed analyses of two writing exercises. The first exercise required 9- and 13-year-olds to write and revise a school report, and the second exercise required 17-year-olds to write and revise a letter in response to a practical, reasonably complex problem. Approximately 2,500 individuals at each age level responded to one of these exercises.

The assessment of writing and revision skills is, of course, a difficult enterprise. Accordingly, the National Assessment has developed a multiphase essay scoring system that is responsive to many dialects and styles, and is descriptive in ways that have pedagogical implications. One aspect of the scoring of writing in this report clearly distinguishes between papers that fulfill a particular expressive task and those that do not, while another aspect responds to the various types of rewriting skills. The thousands of responses were all scored by experienced English and composition teachers. They discussed the rationale for each exercise, studied the scoring guides and read a number of training papers before they commenced the final reading. Each paper was read by two people independently; their categorizations were in agreement over 90% of the time, and when they did disagree, a third reading usually resolved the difference. Throughout the process, the Assessment staff monitored reliability and clarified the procedures to maximize efficiency and minimize cost.

One unusual feature of the scoring system is that it included both evaluative and purely descriptive categories. Papers in the revision exercises were evaluated as to how well they completed the required task and were also categorized according to several nonjudgmental variables. The assessment was designed to provide information both about *how* young writers attempt to revise and *how well* they revised. Both kinds of information are useful to people searching for effective teaching techniques.

Information about writing and rewriting skills are provided at the national level, for the various regions of the country, for both sexes, for blacks and whites, for youngsters whose parents have had various degrees of education, and for various community types. Definitions of the region, parental-education and community-type categories follow.

Reporting Variables

Region

The country has been divided into four regions — Northeast, Southeast, Central and West. The states that are included in each region are shown in Exhibit 1.

EXHIBIT 1. National Assessment Geographic Regions

Parental Education

Four categories of parental education are defined by National Assessment. These categories include: (1) those whose parents have had no high school education, (2) those who have at least one parent with some high school education, (3) those who have at least one parent who graduated from high school and (4) those who have at least one parent who has had some post-high school education. This report concentrates on the no-high-school and post-high-school groups, since results for the others tend to fall between these extremes. Complete data for all groups can be found in the statistical report.[1]

[1] *Writing Technical Report: Exercise Volume, Report 05-W-20* (forthcoming).

Community Type

Community types are identified both by the size of the community and by the type of employment of the majority of people in the community.

High metro, high-socioeconomic or affluent urban and suburban communities. Areas in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are in professional or managerial positions.

Low metro, low-socioeconomic or improverished urban. Areas in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

Rural. Areas with a population under 10,000 where most of the residents are farmers or farm workers.

Urban fringe. Communities within the metropolitan area of a city with a population greater than 200,000, outside city limits and not in the high- or low-socioeconomic urban groups.

Main big city. Communities within the city limits of a city with a population over 200,000 and not included in the high- or low-socioeconomic urban groups.

Medium city. Cities with populations between 25,000 and 200,000 and not within the urban-fringe category.

Small places. Communities with a population of less than 25,000, not in the rural group and not within the urban-fringe category.

The text of this report concentrates on the high-metro, low-metro and extreme-rural groups, since results for the other groups tend to fall between these extremes. Complete data for all groups can be found in the tables.

CHAPTER 2

WRITING A REPORT ABOUT THE MOON

Primary and intermediate school children often face the project of writing reports for school. The following exercise was designed to measure how well 9- and 13-year-olds compose such a report and how they attempt to revise or improve it:

One of the things you do in school is to write reports for science, social studies, and other subjects. Imagine that you are going to write a report about the moon for your science class.

In the box below are some facts about the moon which you can use in your report. You may also add other facts that you remember about the moon from your reading and classwork, from television, or from listening to people.

Write your report as you would tell it to your class. Space is provided on the next three pages. Be sure to report the facts in an order that will be clear and that will make sense to your classmates.

FACTS ABOUT THE MOON
made of rock
mountainous, contains craters
covered with dust
no air or water
no plant or animal life

The moon is made of rocks. It is very mountainous and contains craters. The moon is also covered with dust. It has no air or water so no plants or animals can live on the moon. There are these green men that live on it. They are about 4 feet with a face on every side of there heads. They love to eat Tang. They play around with the machines the astrnaghts left behind & they live increater To cover there walls they just put "Dust coloring." There are about 400 familys of green people, they have little space ships. And they fly around.

Now that you have finished writing, take time to read over your report and think about these questions:

1. Have you organized your report clearly?

2. Will your classmates understand it?

3. Have you said it in the best way you know how?

Make any changes you think will make your report better. You may even change your entire report if you think it is necessary. If you want to make any changes you may cross out words on the report you have already written or redo your report on the lines below. Use the blue pen you have been given.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Students were given a maximum of about 15 minutes to write the first draft with a pencil and 13 additional minutes to make revisions with a pen. Revisions made on the original draft could thereby be distinguished from the draft.

Thirteen-year-olds demonstrated a large improvement over the 9-year-olds in the ability to organize the data, both on the original draft and on the revision. Reports were scored for overall organization on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating no ordering of detail and 4 indicating systematic ordering of detail so that overall unity was present.

Category 1 papers presented facts or ideas randomly with little or no elaboration. Generally these papers were brief, consisting of only one or two disjointed statements. Category 2 papers included some ordering of detail, but were generally sketchy and underdeveloped. They contained clusters in which two or three related facts and ideas were grouped together; however, the groupings were disconnected and randomly presented, as in the following sample:

The moon, which revolves around the earth is small. In 1969 the Apollo space mission made Neil Armstrong the first man to ever to set foot on the earth.

The moon is completely lifeless and entirely unihabited. It's atmosphere contains no air and no water. It is a desolate lonely planet. The moon's land is very mountaineous and covered completely with dust. It has many craters and is actually one big rock, (not a hunk of cheese). It has no animal or plant life. During the fall it seems to become big and glowing as said in the song "Shine on Harvest Moon". And at night during the summer it is read as in the saying:

"Red Sky night, sailors delight,
Red Sky morning sailors take warning"

This is seen different ways at night: full-one-half three-quarter one-quarter and remember the saying about a full moon causing were-wolves? but who believes that, ...hmmm?

Category 2 papers also jumped from one briefly supported idea or set of related facts to the next with little or no transition, as in the following sample:

The moon is made of rock and other things it has craters on its surface. Craters are made by a piece of rock that smashed agensted its surface. Most often it is a peice of a different planet or star. We have sent rocks the the moon to explore we have found out that there is no life on it no water no plants. It is just like a big rock sitting out there.

Some day we will make a it a big need for us but for right now we don't what to use it for some men want to mak it into another some for us becase we are runing out of room here.

Category 3 papers presented a relatively thorough ordering of details, but without overall unity. These papers presented ideas or facts that were expanded and elaborated upon with a logical, if not scientifically accurate, progression of supporting information. The papers generally contained two or three major sections that were internally consistent, but they did not establish transitions or relationships between the sections.

The Moon is one of the heavenly bodies that rotate around the sun. It is made up of rock and is covered by dust. The moon is also mountainous and contains craters.

Human life on the moon would be impossible unless tanks of fresh air, water, and food were sent up there too. This is so because there is no air or water on the moon. There is also no plant or animal life up there either. The moon would probably be very uncomfortable also because one side of the moon is very cold while the other side is quite hot.

Category 4 papers were like Category 3 papers, but also presented facts and ideas in the context of a totally coherent and developed explanation. The selecting, ordering and developing of details were done on the basis of an overall principle of unity. Thematic approaches, such as an hypothetical trip to the moon, a report about astronauts or a contrast between past and present were frequently used as unifying principles.

As Exhibit 2 reveals, over half of the final drafts produced by the 9-year-olds included no ordering of detail (Category 1), while over half of the final drafts written by 13-year-olds included some ordering of detail (Category 2). Final drafts refer to revisions when present and original drafts when revisions were not present. While the ordering of detail was more complete for 13-year-olds than it was for 9-year-olds, at neither age did the majority of students demonstrate an ability to systematically organize the entire report.

EXHIBIT 2. Percentages of 9- and 13-Year-Olds in Each of the Four Categories of Overall Organization on the Moon Reports, Both on the Original and on the Final Draft

	Category 1 Unorganized	Category 2 Details Grouped Together	Category 3 Sections Organized Without Overall Unity	Category 4 Overall Unity
9-year-olds				
Original draft	52.0%	23.2%	10.2%	0.5%
Final draft*	51.9	23.7	10.5	0.5
13-year-olds				
Original draft	25.8	51.4	16.9	1.9
Final draft*	25.3	52.0	18.5	1.9

**A small percentage of students wrote moon reports only in the space provided for revisions, so the total of final-draft percentages is slightly greater than the total of original-draft percentages.*

There were, however, some significant differences by groups. At the 9-year-old level (Exhibit 3), more girls than boys wrote reports categorized 2 or better, while more boys than girls wrote reports categorized 1. The difference between male and female results for Category 2 was 7.7 percentage points; for Category 1, the difference was 8.9 percentage points. There were also significant differences by race, but these seem to be largely a consequence of the high percentage of black papers that were not

EXHIBIT 3. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 9-Year-Olds on the Final Draft of the Moon Report: Overall Organization

	Category 1 Unorganized	Category 2 Details Grouped Together	Category 3 Sections Organized Without Overall Unity	Category 4 Overall Unity
National percentage	51.9	23.7	10.5	0.5
Sex				
Male	4.5*	-3.9*	-2.6*	-0.2
Female	-4.4*	3.8*	2.5*	0.2
Race				
Black	-7.5*	-9.1*	-1.6	-0.2
White	2.0*	2.2*	0.3	0.0
Parental education				
No high school	-3.5	-3.8	-3.8	-0.5*
Some high school	3.3	-10.0*	1.0	-0.5*
Graduated high school	2.8	-1.4	-0.6	0.1
Post high school	-5.2*	8.5*	1.9	0.1
Community type				
Low metro	-5.4	-4.8	1.0	-0.5*
Extreme rural	1.7	1.0	-0.9	-0.5*
Small places	-0.1	-0.6	-0.7	0.5
Medium city	-0.7	-2.7	0.2	-0.3
Main big city	-6.4	7.4*	-0.7	-0.5*
Urban fringe	8.0*	-5.0	1.0	0.5
High metro	3.0	7.6*	1.6	-0.5*
Region				
Southeast	-5.9*	-1.0	-0.2	-0.3
West	2.4	-0.5	0.5	0.0
Central	4.9	-1.3	-3.0*	-0.4
Northeast	-3.0	3.0	3.2	0.7

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p < .05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

scored because they were illegible, illiterate, on an entirely different subject, included no response, or simply an "I don't know" (all together, 31.7% of the papers by black 9-year-olds fell into these categories) Results also varied for different parental-education categories; 9-year-olds whose parents had completed some formal education beyond high school wrote proportionally fewer Category 1 papers (5.2 percentage points) than the nation as a whole and more Category 2 papers (8.5 percentage points) than the nation as a whole. Results showed some differences by community type and region. Nine-year-olds in the high-metro category wrote proportionally more (7.6 percentage points) Category 2 papers; Southeastern 9-year-olds wrote proportionally fewer Category 1 reports.

In general, 13-year-olds obtained a much higher percentage (52.0%) of Category 2 reports and a lower percentage (25.3%) of Category 1 reports than did 9-year-olds (Exhibit 4). Again, there were differences by subpopulation, but the differences did not follow exactly the same pattern as the 9-year-old differences. For example, the male/female difference was considerably smaller. Thirteen-year-old males did write more Category 1 papers than did females (a difference of 5.4 percentage points), but no significant differences were reported in the other three categories. On the other hand, differences between blacks and whites increased to 15.2 percentage points for the Category 2 papers. Only 12.6% of the black 13-year-olds wrote papers that were not scored for the reasons listed above, and those who wrote papers tended to show less systematic organization than did their white counterparts. Differences by degree of parental education also increased; 15.9 percentage points separated the 13-year-olds whose parents had no high school education from the 13-year-olds whose parents had some post-high school education in the writing of Category 2 reports. Differences by community type also seemed more pronounced. Thirteen-year-olds in the low-metro group wrote significantly more Category 1 papers and fewer Category 2 papers (13.1 percentage points and 18.4 percentage points, respectively) than the nation as a whole, while 13-year-olds in the high-metro category wrote fewer Category 1 papers and more Category 2 papers than the nation as a whole.

Most students attempted to revise (60.2% of the 9-year-olds and 78.1% of the 13-year-olds), but 13-year-olds were more likely to rewrite the entire piece rather than simply make corrections on the original (Exhibit 5). The revisions, however, generally had little or no influence on the overall organization of the reports (Exhibit 6). For both the 9- and 13-year-olds and for reports in all four categories, approximately 85% of those who revised wrote end products that were categorized the same as their first drafts for overall organization. The remainder of the revisions included almost as many declines as improvements in overall organization.

While revisions generally did not change the overall quality of the reports, they did include many specific improvements. Revisions were classified in the following nine categories: cosmetic, mechanical, grammatical, continuational, informational, transitional, stylistic, organizational and holistic (Exhibit 7). *Cosmetic changes*, that is, changes in the appearance of legibility of the original report, were made by 20.6% of the 9-year-olds who revised and 14.3% of the 13-year-olds who revised. *Mechanical changes*, which included changes in spelling, punctuation, underlining, paragraphing and capitalization, were made more often by 13-year-olds than by 9-year-olds. Forty-six percent of the 9-year-olds and 62.8% of the 13-year-olds who revised made such changes. *Grammatical changes*, which included changes to fit grammatical conventions like subject/verb or antecedent/pronoun agreement, were made by 36.9% of the 9-year-olds and 47.3% of the 13-year-olds. *Continuational changes*, which included the addition of a word, phrase,

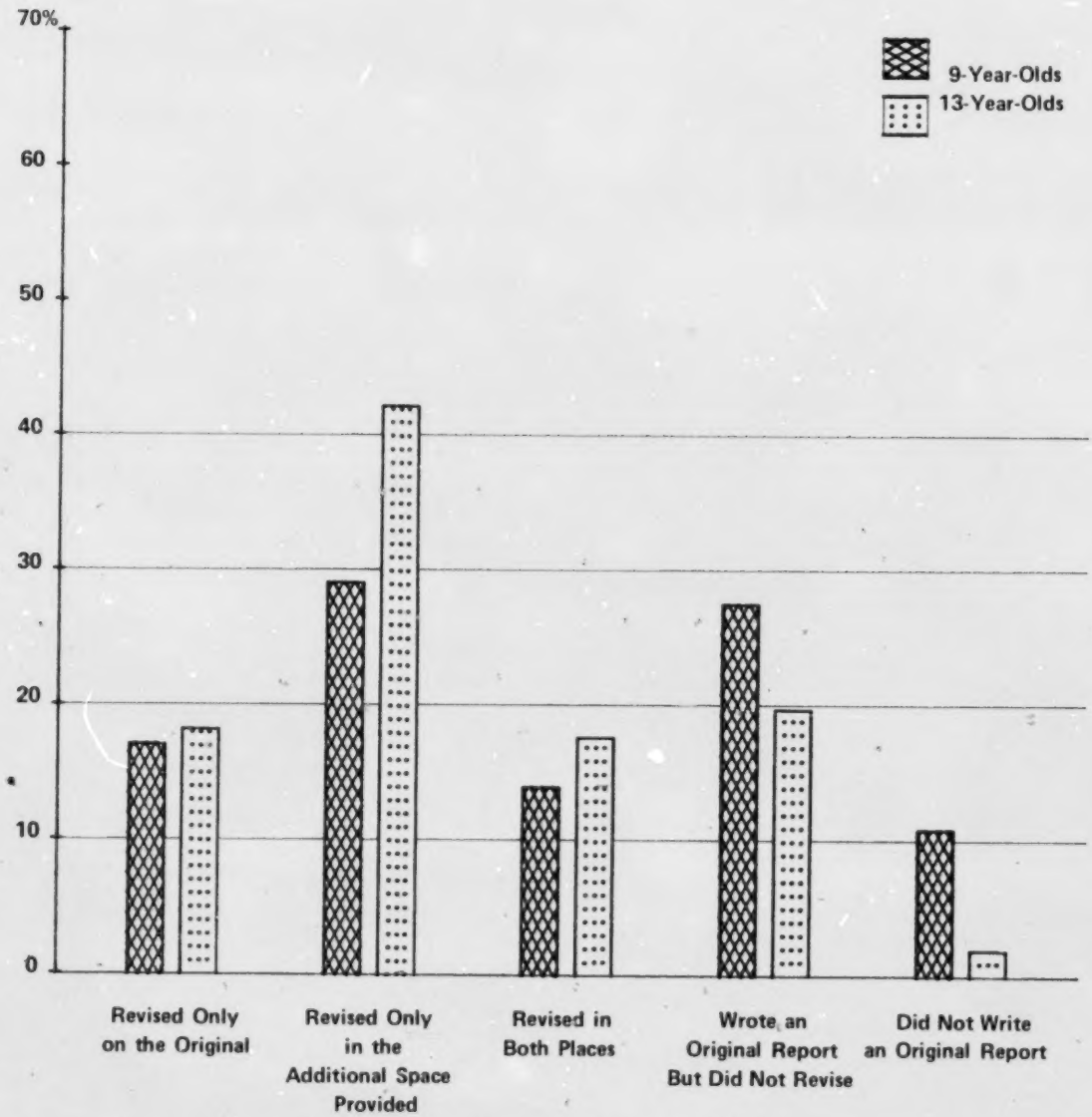
EXHIBIT 4. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 13-Year-Olds on the Final Draft of the Moon Report: Overall Organization

	Category 1 Unorganized	Category 2 Details Grouped Together	Category 3 Sections Organized Without Overall Unity	Category 4 Overall Unity
National percentage	25.3	52.0	18.5	1.9
Sex				
Male	2.6*	-1.8	-1.2	0.5
Female	-2.8*	2.0	1.3	-0.5
Race				
Black	8.0*	-13.2*	-4.3	-0.8
White	-1.6*	2.0*	0.9*	0.1
Parental education				
No high school	6.4	-10.7*	-1.9	-1.9*
Some high school	5.4	-6.9	-1.0	0.4
Graduated high school	2.5	0.5	-1.8	-0.6
Post high school	-6.5*	5.2*	2.6*	0.6
Community type				
Low metro	13.1*	-18.4*	-1.4	0.6
Extreme rural	-3.9	11.1*	-8.0*	0.8
Small places	5.3*	-0.6	-3.6*	-1.3*
Medium city	1.8	-4.8*	3.0	0.0
Main big city	-6.1*	-1.1	7.7	1.0
Urban fringe	-5.6*	7.3*	-0.3	-0.9
High metro	-8.6*	1.7	4.9	3.7*
Region				
Southeast	4.7*	-3.8	-3.6	-0.9*
West	-3.4*	2.8	0.3	0.7
Central	-1.5	1.0	1.1	0.5
Northeast	0.9	-0.5	1.5	-0.4

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p < .05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

sentence or section to the end of the original report, were made more commonly by 9-year-olds. Thirty-four percent of the 9-year-olds and 27.8% of the 13-year-olds who revised made such changes. *Transitional changes*, which included the addition, deletion or substitution of connectives or short transitional sections, were made three times as often by 13-year-olds as by 9-year-olds. Only 10.3% of the 9-year-olds and 31.0% of the 13-year-olds made such changes. *Informational changes*, which included the addition or deletion of information, were made by 42.3% of the 9-year-

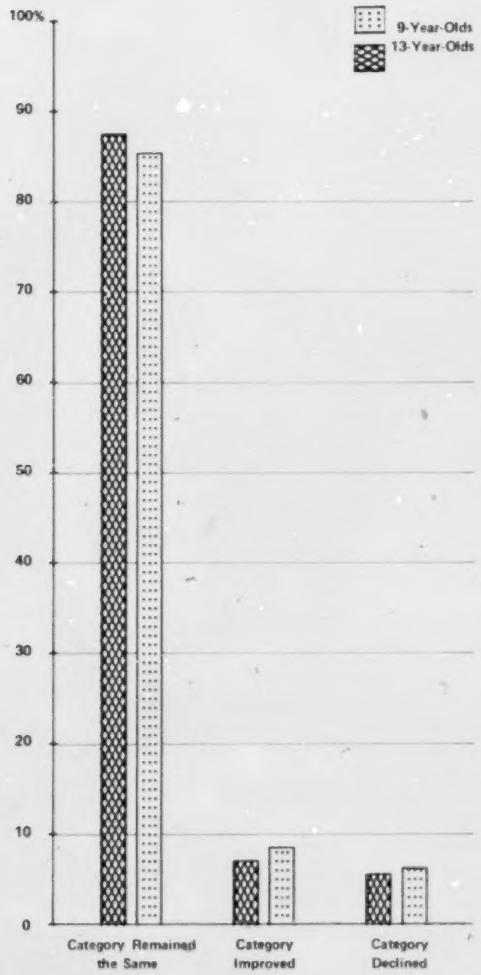
EXHIBIT 5. Percentages of 9- and 13-Year-Olds Who Revised the Moon Reports



olds and 61.3% of the 13-year-olds. *Stylistic changes*, which involved substituting a word, phrase or sentence for another where the informational content was not altered, were also made more commonly by 13-year-olds. Forty-three percent of the 9-year-olds and 67.5% of the 13-year-olds made such changes. *Organizational changes*, which involved rearranging the elements at the sentence or paragraph level, were made twice as often by 13-year-olds as by 9-year-olds. Eleven percent of the 9-year-olds and 22.7% of the 13-year-olds made such changes. Finally, *holistic changes*, which involved a radical departure from the overall approach taken in the original reports, were made by only 6.0% of the 9-year-olds who revised and 5.3% of the 13-year-olds who

revised. An additional 9.9% of the 9-year-old revisions and 1.7% of the 13-year-old revisions were not categorized because of illegibility or incoherence.

EXHIBIT 6. Percentages of Category Change for 9- and 13-Year-Olds Who Attempted to Revise the Moon Reports



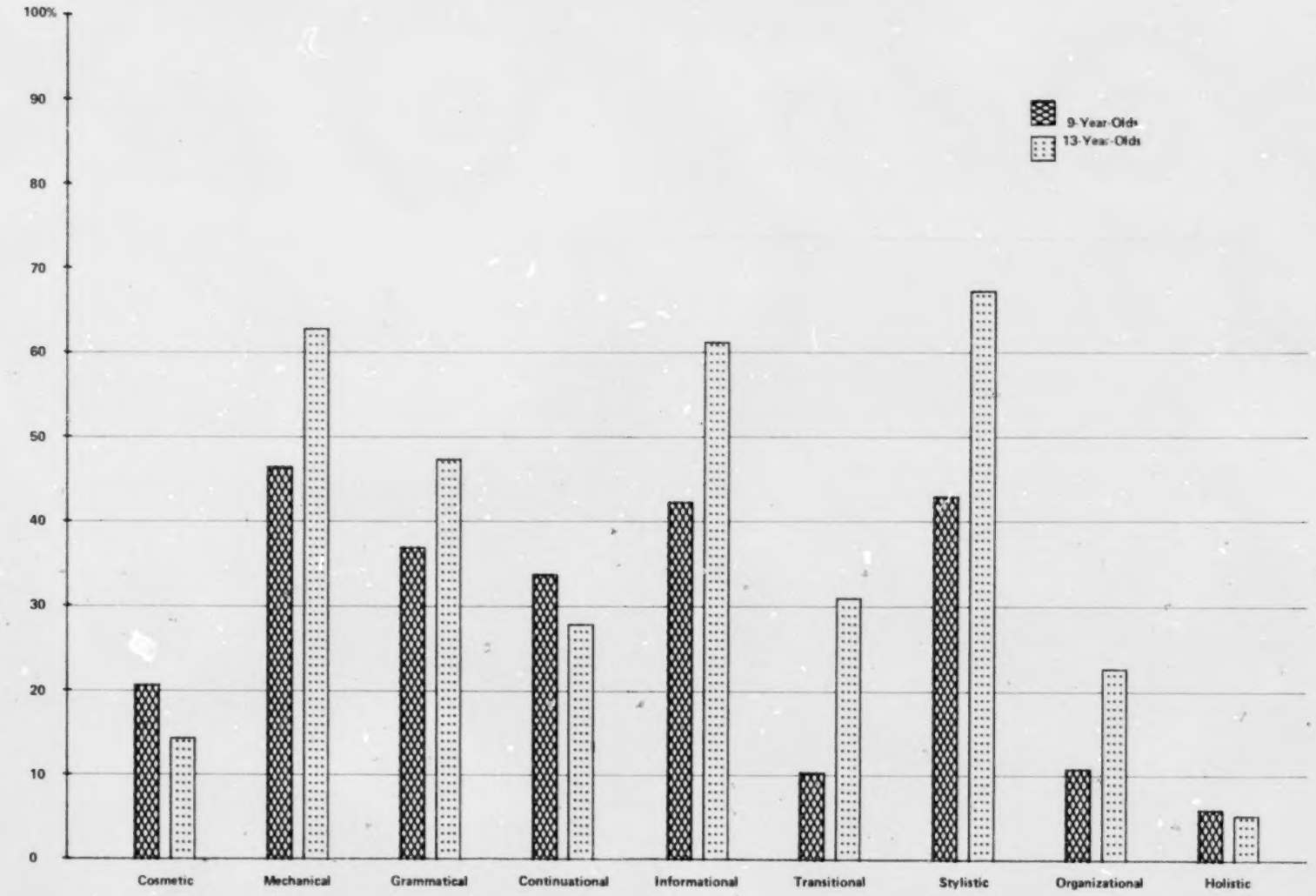
In summary, 13-year-olds were more able to organize their reports and to make higher-level revisions than were 9-year-olds. More 13-year-olds demonstrated an awareness of organizational and transitional needs in their revision than did 9-year-olds, although the percentages of such revisions were still small. Proportionally, 13-year-olds made twice as many organizational and three times as many transitional changes as did the 9-year-olds. Thirteen-year-olds also included a proportionally greater number of grammatical, informational and stylistic changes than did 9-year-olds. On the other hand, the changes made by 9-year-olds seemed to reflect a more superficial perception of revision; 9-year-olds included more cosmetic changes than did 13-year-olds, and when they added information, entered it without concern for logical order. In general, 13-year-olds demonstrated a broader range of types of revision than did 9-year-olds.

Again, there were significant differences by subpopulations. In general, 9-year-old males tended to make fewer revisions than females. Of those who made revisions, the difference between the sexes was greatest on stylistic changes, where 12.8 percentage points separated the groups (Exhibit 8). Similarly, blacks tended to make fewer types of changes than their white counterparts; differences between these groups were significant only for holistic changes, where blacks recorded a 7.9 point advantage over whites. Holistic changes, which involved starting from scratch, might well indicate a lack of familiarity with what is expected in revision; so a higher percentage in the category might indicate less of an ability to revise.

Degree of parental education also had some effect on the types of revisions 9-year-olds made. In general, 9-year-olds whose parents had some formal education beyond high school included more transitional and stylistic changes (2.3 and 4.1 percentage points, respectively) than the nation as a whole and fewer holistic changes (1.9 points) than the nation as a whole. Nine-year-olds in the post-high-school group tended to make more types of revisions than did 9-year-olds in general.

The greatest difference between the low- and high-metro groups was found on tran-

EXHIBIT 7. Percentages of Types of Revision for 9- and 13-Year-Olds Who Attempted to Revise the Moon Report



sitional revision, where 10.4 percentage points separated the more productive high-metro group from the low-metro group. Nine-year-olds in the extreme-rural group made fewer stylistic changes (9.9 percentage points) than the nation as a whole.

Differences by region were greatest for organizational and informational revisions. Proportionally more Southeastern 9-year-olds (3.9 percentage points) and fewer Northeastern 9-year-olds (5.2 percentage points) made organizational changes than the nation as a whole. More Western 9-year-olds (5.5 percentage points) made informational revisions than did 9-year-olds in the nation as a whole.

Again, differences by subpopulations for 13-year-olds (Exhibit 9) were quite different than the differences for 9-year-olds. In

EXHIBIT 8. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 9-Year-Olds Who Revised the Moon Report: Types of Revision

	Cosmetic	Mechanical	Grammatical	Continuational	Informational	Transitional	Stylistic	Organizational	Holistic
National percentage	20.6	46.4	36.9	33.7	42.3	10.3	43.1	10.8	6.0
Sex									
Male	-0.7	-1.0	-0.1	-0.8	-3.4	-0.8	-7.0*	-1.1	-2.0*
Female	0.6	0.8	0.1	0.6	2.8*	0.6	5.8*	0.9	1.7*
Race									
Black	-2.4	1.4	0.0	-2.2	-5.8	-2.1	-4.8	1.6	6.8*
White	0.2	0.3	-0.2	0.8	1.0	0.2	0.9	-0.3	-1.1*
Parental education									
No high school	-8.5	-4.1	8.8	-1.4	-0.7	-0.4	-4.2	-3.9	-0.4
Some high school	-5.9	1.1	-4.4	0.2	8.2	2.5	-0.4	1.1	6.0
Graduated high school	-1.0	-3.8	-3.8	1.4	-2.0	0.1	-5.6*	0.7	2.9
Post high school	2.5	0.4	2.1	2.4	3.5	2.3*	4.1*	1.2	-1.9*
Community type									
Low metro	-2.8	5.3	3.8	-4.5	-4.7	-3.4*	-3.1	-1.8	7.1*
Extreme rural	-5.6	-7.9	0.5	-0.9	7.6	-2.5	-9.9*	-0.5	-2.6
Small places	-0.5	-5.6*	-0.5	-4.5	-0.8	-2.7	0.6	0.7	0.5
Medium city	-1.7	-1.7	-0.4	5.9	1.5	2.4	2.1	0.3	0.1
Main big city	5.7	4.0	-4.5	10.6*	-4.0	-1.0	-5.3	-2.6	0.7
Urban fringe	-2.4	7.6	-0.7	-3.6	0.5	1.4	6.5	1.9	-2.7
High metro	5.2	4.7	4.8	-1.6	2.9	7.0*	3.3	0.5	-2.9
Region									
Southeast	-2.6	-5.1	1.9	0.6	0.3	-1.6	0.1	3.9*	1.2
West	-1.0	0.8	-0.9	2.5	5.5*	2.1	0.8	0.6	-0.9
Central	2.8	0.2	2.7	-1.7	-1.5	0.4	-1.3	0.5	-0.5
Northeast	-0.8	3.3	-4.9	-0.9	-4.8	-1.8	0.9	-5.2*	0.9

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p < .05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

general, the sex of the respondent and the education level of his parents continued to show some differences, while race and community type became more significant variables.

Thirteen-year-old males and females demonstrated a significant difference from one another only on informational, stylistic and organizational revisions, where 7.0, 5.8 and 6.6 percentage points, respectively, separated their scores.

Differences by race, however, were much more pronounced for 13-year-olds than for 9-year-olds. Blacks tended to make fewer revisions than whites. Of those who revised, blacks performed significantly below the nation as a whole and whites significantly above the nation as a whole in making

EXHIBIT 9. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 13-Year-Olds Who Revised the Moon Report: Types of Revision

	Cosmetic	Mechanical	Grammatical	Continuational	Informational	Transitional	Stylistic	Organizational	Holistic
National percentage	14.3	62.8	47.3	27.8	61.3	31.0	67.5	22.7	5.3
Sex									
Male	0.1	-0.8	2.9*	-0.5	-3.4*	-1.6	-2.8*	-3.2*	-0.6
Female	-0.1	0.8	-3.1	0.5	3.6*	1.7	3.0*	3.4*	0.7
Race									
Black	1.7	-11.7*	1.0	3.9	-10.3*	-13.2*	-20.7*	-9.2*	4.8
White	0.0	1.7*	0.4	-0.2	1.2	1.5*	2.7*	1.0*	-0.5*
Parental education									
No high school	-4.3	-9.3	-3.1	1.8	-0.6	-7.4	-8.5	-4.0	2.5
Some high school	-4.0	-8.2	-5.1	-0.7	-7.5	-1.3	-11.0*	2.4	5.2*
Graduated high school	-2.5	0.2	1.1	-2.3	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.8	-0.2
Post high school	2.3*	2.9*	2.0	1.9	4.0*	2.0	4.2*	0.4	-1.3*
Community type									
Low metro	-1.8	-11.7	-1.5	-3.8	-17.2*	-10.3*	-20.1*	-11.2*	0.9
Extreme rural	-7.3*	-10.3	-10.6*	-2.0	-2.1	1.5	-4.2	0.8	1.1
Small places	-1.4	-2.8	0.0	1.5	-0.8	-3.6	-0.4	1.9	-1.3
Medium city	-1.4	-4.6	-0.2	-1.9	0.8	0.3	2.7	-3.4	1.6
Main big city	0.6	7.1	5.1	4.9	3.0	3.7	1.5	1.5	1.8
Urban fringe	4.9	3.4	-0.5	-7.0*	-1.3	3.5	-2.3	0.2	-0.4
High metro	2.4	12.5*	2.4	6.8	9.5*	4.4	11.6*	1.7	-0.6
Region									
Southeast	-2.5	-0.9	4.9	-0.8	-2.4	-3.6	-3.4	1.0	0.8
West	-0.9	0.3	0.8	4.9*	1.8	1.6	1.4	0.6	0.4
Central	-1.9	1.4	-1.1	-5.1*	1.7	-0.3	3.3	-0.4	-1.6*
Northeast	5.4*	-1.2	-3.9	1.1	-2.0	1.7	-2.5	-1.0	0.6

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p<.05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

mechanical, transitional, stylistic and organizational changes on their papers. The difference between the groups was greatest in stylistic changes, where 23.4 percentage points separated their results.

The parental-education differences follow the usual pattern, but the differences were not large. The post-high-school group performed significantly above the nation as a whole in making cosmetic, mechanical, informational and stylistic changes. Differences were greatest in informational and stylistic changes, where 4.0 and 4.2 percentage points separated the group from the nation as a whole. The post-high-school group made slightly fewer holistic changes than did the nation as a whole.

Differences by community type, especially differences between the high-metro and low-metro groups, were notably larger in these categories. Thirteen-year-olds in the low-metro group attempted fewer types of revision than did their counterparts in the high-metro group. Percentages for the low-metro group were 17.2 percentage points below the nation as a whole for informational revisions, 10.3 points below for transitional revisions, 20.1 points below for stylistic revisions and 11.2 points below for organizational revisions. Percentages for the high-metro group were 12.5 points above the nation for mechanical revisions, 9.5 points above for informational revisions and 11.6 points above for stylistic revisions.

Regional data indicate that Western 13-year-olds attempted more (4.9 percentage points) and Central 13-year-olds fewer (5.1 percentage points) continuational changes than the nation as a whole. Youngsters from the Central region also attempted proportionally fewer (1.6 percentage points) holistic changes than youngsters from the nation as a whole, while those from the Northeast completed more (5.4 percentage points) cosmetic changes than the nation as a whole.

The most disturbing group data describe differences by race and community type at the 13-year-old level. Transitional, stylistic and organizational revisions, all of which require a degree of sophistication, are more often attempted by the advantaged groups. Differences between white and black or high and low metro sometimes are larger than 20 percentage points.

CHAPTER 3

WRITING A LETTER OF COMPLAINT

Seventeen-year-olds were given 18 minutes to compose a more practical note in response to the following situation:

Imagine you are taking care of a neighbor's children for an afternoon. You send one of the children to the corner store to buy some peaches for a snack.

The store owner, Mr. Jones, whom you have known and liked for several years apparently took advantage of the child. The peaches are rotten. You want to send the child back with the peaches and a note to clear up the situation.

Write a note to the grocer that expresses your displeasure and proposes what Mr. Jones ought to do about the situation. Space is provided on the next three pages. Sign your name "Lee Smith."

_____

_____

_____

_____

Dear Mr Jones

I take pen in hand to inform you that I harbor no grudge or ill-feelings toward you. However I think it was an awfully low trick to employ to sell an innocent child rotten peaches. What if you had to eat those peaches. (and from the way you look I think you do regularly. I am therefore asking that you refund my money. I have respected you for many years and for

Lee Smith

Now that you have finished writing, take time to improve your note to Mr. Jones. Think about these questions:

1. Does your note state the situation clearly?

2. Have you made your feelings clear?

3. Have you made clear what you expect Mr. Jones to do about it?

4. Are there any changes that would make your note more effective?

Make any changes you think will make your note better. You may even change your entire note if you think it is necessary. If you decide to change your note, you may cross out words on the note you have already written or redo your note on the lines below. Use the blue pen you have been given.

_____

_____

The item requires 17-year-olds to express clearly several related bits of information in an appropriate tone. As in the previous exercise, first drafts and the revisions were scored for these basic requirements as well as other types of changes the students might have found necessary.

The most important bits of information were that rotten peaches were sold to the child (87.2% of the final drafts included this information) and that some type of redress, such as exchanging the peaches or refunding the money, would be appropriate (90.5% of the final drafts included this information). The phrase "final draft" refers to revisions when they were present and original drafts when revisions were not present.

Eighty-one percent included both bits of essential information. Other important bits of information included the fact that the writer was responsible for the child (55.5% included this information), an indication of previous familiarity with the grocer or with the grocery store (33.6% included this information), and the fact that the peaches were bought recently (only 18.4% included this fact). The last two bits of information were not considered essential because familiarity with the grocer and the fact that the peaches were bought recently might both be tacitly understood by both parties. Approximately two-thirds of the 17-year-olds included at least three of these five bits of information, and few revisions demonstrated any addition or deletion of these bits of information.

Significantly more females than males included each of these facts in their letter (Exhibit 10). The difference between the sexes was greatest in mentioning that the peaches were bought recently; 10.5 percentage points separated males and females in this category.

Similarly, whites performed better than blacks in mentioning four out of the five facts in their letters. Differences as large as 11 percentage points separated the two groups; however, there was no significant difference between the groups in mentioning the writer's responsibility for the child.

Seventeen-year-olds whose parents had some post-high school education tended to include more information than those whose parents had less education; however, the differences were not as consistent as in the previous two variables.

Differences by community type were also not as consistent as the male/female or black/white differences. As in the other variables, the most noteworthy differences were recorded in including the information that the peaches were bought recently. Results for the low-metro group were 8.7 percentage points below the nation as a whole, while results for the high-metro group were 9.6 percentage points above the nation as a whole for this information.

There were no significant differences by region.

Tone, the manner in which the students attempted to convey these facts to the grocer, was also considered an important aspect of the exercise. Fifty-nine percent of the final drafts attempted to persuade the grocer by means of a generally factual tone. Some of the letters in this category included mild disapproval, but were not personally abusive, as in the following example:

Mr. Jones:

I am extremely upset with what seems to be an apparent mistake on your part. Earlier today, I sent a neighbor's child to your store to buy some peaches. The child returned home with rotten peaches. Surely, you did not mean

to take advantage of a mere child. I am sending the peaches back in order that you may clear up the situation by replacing the damaged peaches. I am sure you will agree that you have made a mistake and will willingly comply with my wishes.

Lee Smith

Twenty-four percent of the 17-year-olds assumed a hostile tone. These letters included threats to sue, call the Better Business Bureau or never shop at the store again, as shown in the following example:

Dear Mr. Jones,

I sent one of my neighbor's children to your store this afternoon to buy some peaches.

EXHIBIT 10. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 17-Year-Olds on the Letter of Complaint: Types of Information Included

	Rotten Peaches Sold	Request Redress	Responsible for Child	Peaches Bought Recently	Previous Familiarity With Grocer
National percentage	87.2	90.5	55.5	18.4	33.6
Sex					
Male	-3.1*	-2.5*	-4.5*	-5.4*	-2.9*
Female	3.0*	2.4*	4.3*	5.1*	2.8*
Race					
Black	-6.7*	-9.0*	-6.4	-8.0*	-9.9*
White	0.9*	1.5*	0.9	1.4*	0.9*
Parental education					
No high school	-8.2*	-3.1	-4.5	-6.1*	1.1
Some high school	-1.1	-3.1	-5.9	-8.8*	-5.4
Graduated high school	0.9	0.2	-3.7*	-2.9*	-2.0
Post high school	1.3	2.0*	4.6*	5.9*	2.6*
Community type					
Low metro	0.1	-0.4	-2.9	-8.7*	-4.7
Extreme rural	1.2	-1.8	4.0	3.1	-0.6
Small places	-1.2	0.5	-2.6	0.1	-2.5
Medium city	-0.1	-0.6	-4.5	-5.7*	2.5
Main big city	-1.3	-1.2	3.9	2.2	-0.1
Urban fringe	3.7	5.2*	4.7	5.1	3.4
High metro	0.0	-2.5	6.5*	9.6*	5.6
Region					
Southeast	-2.4	-0.5	-1.8	-3.1	-4.8
West	0.2	-0.3	1.3	0.3	-2.2
Central	0.3	-0.6	2.0	0.7	3.0
Northeast	1.2	1.2	-2.0	1.2	2.1

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p < .05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

Obviously, you took advantage of a small child and sold him a carton of rotten peaches. I therefore demand that you either refund the money or exchange the rotten peaches immediately. If you fail to comply I will file a complaint against you to the Food and Drug Administration and the Board of Health for selling rotten peaches.

Lee Smith

Twelve percent of the group assumed the conciliatory tone; these individuals were especially concerned with preserving the present relationship with the grocer while still solving the problem. They frequently included alternative explanations about how the child bought rotten peaches (for example, "I'm sure you did not know the peaches were rotten"), favorable references to the grocer's character, personal pleasantries ("How's your wife?"), and indications that the relationship as a grocer will continue ("I look forward to doing business with you in the future."):

Mr. Jones,

I sent Karen to your store to buy some peaches, thinking that she knew how to choose them. Apparently she doesn't, for the ones she came home with are rotten. You wouldn't mind exchanging them for other, fresher ones, would you?

Thank you very much,
Lee Smith

Three percent of the students demonstrated control over a combination of tones; this group included responses with the greatest flexibility and sophistication in the handling of tone:

Mr. Jones,

I am staying with three children this afternoon while their parents are away. I sent one of them to your store to buy some peaches. I don't know why, but it seems as though you have taken advantage of the child. what kind of a way is this to do business? I have known you for a long time and this is the first time anything like this has ever happened.

I believe that your standards are higher than this. I don't believe you actually wanted to take advantage of the child. I have sent the peaches back to the store and I think you will want to replace them. What kind of an outlook on life are you giving this young child. If you think about it I'm sure you will discover you have done the wrong thing, and I expect you should want to make amends for you mistake. I would like to continue shopping at your store, but unless this matter is cleared up at once I will have to find someone who is more trustworthy. I am sure it will be taken care of.

Thank You,
Lee Smith

One percent wrote with unreasonable hostility, which included irrelevant or distractive anger, excessive use of obscenity and invective or excessive threats like burning down the store or seriously assaulting the grocer.

In summary, most (59.1%) letters were generally factual, while the remainder were categorized as generally hostile (24.1%), generally conciliatory (11.8%), complex (2.7%) or unreasonably hostile (1.3%), but there were significant differences by groups (Exhibit 11).

Differences by sex follow some of the stereotypes. More females than males wrote letters that were factual or conciliatory, while more males than females wrote letters that were generally hostile or even unreasonably hostile.

Differences by race were unusually small. Slightly fewer blacks wrote letters that were conciliatory or unreasonably hostile, and slightly more whites wrote letters that were unreasonably hostile.

Differences by parental education were also small. Fewer 17-year-olds whose parents had no high school education and more 17-year-olds whose parents had some formal education beyond high school wrote letters that were generally conciliatory, but these differences were not large.

Differences by community type were larger than the differences in any of the other variables, but the differences were still not great. More 17-year-olds in the low-metro group and fewer 17-year-olds in the high-metro group wrote generally factual letters than did the nation as a whole, and fewer in the low-metro group wrote generally conciliatory letters.

The only significant difference by region was that fewer (5.9 percentage points) 17-year-olds from the Southeast wrote letters that were generally hostile.

EXHIBIT 11. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 17-Year-Olds on the Letter of Complaint: Tone of the Letter

	Generally Hostile	Generally Factual	Generally Conciliatory	Complex	Unreasonably Hostile
National percentage	24.1	59.1	11.8	2.7	1.3
Sex					
Male	4.9*	-3.3*	-3.1*	-0.1	1.3*
Female	-4.7*	3.1*	3.0*	0.1	-1.3*
Race					
Black	-3.8	5.2	-3.2*	-1.1	-0.8*
White	0.1	-0.4	0.5	0.2	0.2*
Parental education					
No high school	-0.7	5.2	-4.6*	0.5	-0.6
Some high school	-0.8	3.3	-1.0	-0.9	-0.7
Graduated high school	0.6	1.3	-2.1*	-0.1	0.5
Post high school	-0.1	-2.6	2.9*	0.3	-0.1
Community type					
Low metro	2.2	6.5*	-7.4*	-0.8	-0.9
Extreme rural	-0.6	-2.9	2.4	0.6	0.4
Small places	-1.3	0.0	1.0	0.8	-0.6
Medium city	-0.6	0.0	-0.7	0.0	0.9
Main big city	-0.8	3.0	-1.0	-0.3	-0.5
Urban fringe	-1.0	2.5	1.7	-2.5*	-0.1
High metro	4.7	-10.7*	3.9	1.1	1.6
Region					
Southeast	-5.9*	3.3	2.2	0.3	0.0
West	0.4	-1.4	1.3	0.1	0.0
Central	1.0	-1.0	0.2	0.4	-0.4
Northeast	2.7	-0.1	-2.8	-0.8	0.3

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p<.05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

Revisions seldom included any significant change in tone (Exhibit 12). Thirty-seven percent of the revisions included no discernible change in tone, and another 41% of the notes were never revised. When changes of tones did occur, they generally became more conciliatory or more hostile, but not more complex or more factual.

EXHIBIT 12. Percentages Who Changed Tone Between Original and Revised Letter of Complaint

Revised letter more conciliatory	9.2%
Revised letter more hostile	11.1
Revised letter more complex or factual	0.9
Revised letter a burlesque of hostility	0.5
Revised letter does not change tone	37.2
No revision	41.4

As in the previous exercise, revisions were categorized as follows: cosmetic, mechanical, grammatical, continuational, careless error, informational, transitional, stylistic, organizational and holistic. Of the 17-year-olds who revised, over 55% made informational and stylistic changes, over 35% made mechanical changes and less than 20% made any other type of change (Exhibit 14). Almost 60% of the 17-year-olds rewrote the entire letter, while 20% revised on the original (Exhibit 13).

EXHIBIT 13. Percentage of 17-Year-Olds Who Revised the Letter of Complaint

Revised only on the original	9.4%
Revised only in the additional space provided	47.5
Revised in both places	10.7
Did not revise	32.4

There were some significant differences by groups in the types of revisions made (Exhibit 15). More females than males made revisions, especially informational, stylistic and organizational changes (12.7, 14.3 and 4.0 percentage points, respectively, separate the groups); males, on the other hand, made more (5.9 percentage points) holistic changes than did females. Blacks and whites also demonstrated significant differences of about the same magnitude. Differences between the groups are 7.7 percentage points for grammatical changes and 11.4 percentage points for informational changes; in both categories, whites included more changes than blacks. Whites also included more (10.5 percentage points) stylistic changes than did the nation as a whole.

The greatest difference by parental-education categories was that fewer (11.8 percentage points) 17-year-olds from the no-high-school group made stylistic changes than did 17-year-olds as a whole. More 17-year-olds from the post-high-school group made fewer (2.6 percentage points) grammatical and more (3.4 percentage points) informational changes than did 17-year-olds as a whole.

High-metro youths, like the post-high-school group, also made fewer (9.4 percentage points) grammatical changes than the nation as a whole. There were no other significant changes in the three community-type groups this report focuses on.

By region, the greatest differences were found in cosmetic changes. Fewer (4.6 percentage points) Central youths and more (4.7 percentage points) Northeastern youths made such changes. Seventeen-year-olds from the West also made more (3.3 percentage points) transitional changes than did 17-year-olds as a whole.

In general, the better the original note (that is, the more bits of important information it included), the greater the proportion of students who made revisions (Exhibit 16). Individuals who demonstrated a willingness and ability to explain the entire situation were also more willing to make adjustments for their audience.

EXHIBIT 14. Percentages of Types of Revision for 17-Year-Olds Who Attempted to Revise the Letter of Complaint

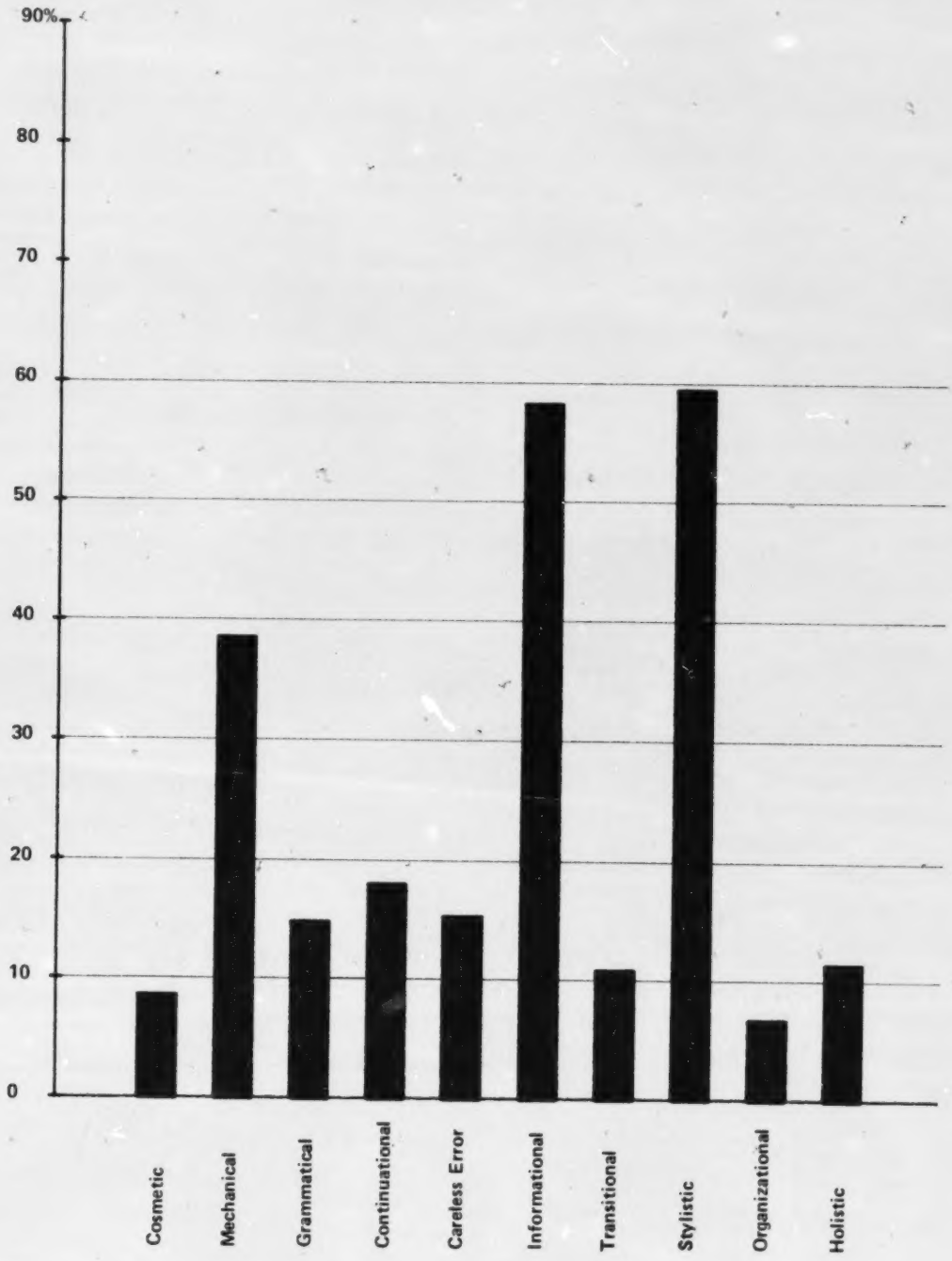


EXHIBIT 15. Group Differences From the National Percentage for 17-Year-Olds Who Revised the Letter of Complaint: Types of Revision

	Cosmetic	Mechanical	Grammatical	Continuational	Careless Error	Informational	Transitional	Stylistic	Organizational	Holistic
National percentage	5.5	24.7	9.5	11.5	9.8	37.4	6.9	38.1	4.3	7.3
Sex										
Male	0.4	-2.0	-0.8	-1.4	-0.6	-6.7*	-0.9	-7.3*	-1.6*	1.4
Female	-0.4	1.9	0.8	1.4	0.6	6.4*	0.9	6.9*	1.5*	-1.3
Race										
Black	2.5	-4.4	2.1	-0.7	0.1	-10.9*	-1.7	-11.3*	-1.7*	0.0
White	-0.3	0.5	-0.6*	-0.1	0.0	1.8*	0.1	1.6*	0.3*	0.1
Parental education										
No high school	3.6	-0.1	-0.2	0.4	-0.5	1.0	1.1	-4.4	-1.2	7.1*
Some high school	1.4	7.7	12.6*	2.8	-0.4	1.1	0.7	2.0	-0.6	2.3
Graduated high school	-1.7	1.0	-0.3	1.2	-2.6	-2.8	-2.7	0.5	-0.4	0.2
Post high school	0.3	-0.4	-1.4	-0.2	1.9*	3.2*	1.2*	2.3	0.5	-1.4
Community type										
Low metro	0.4	-2.9	-2.7	-1.3	-2.1	-7.1	-2.3	-8.2	-1.9*	2.8
Extreme rural	-1.2	1.5	-1.3	2.5	-1.5	3.2	0.8	3.1	0.0	-0.9
Small places	0.4	-1.2	0.9	-1.1	0.2	-2.3	-1.1	-1.6	-0.3	0.4
Medium city	-0.2	0.3	2.1	0.0	-0.8	-1.3	0.6	-0.2	0.4	1.0
Main big city	-0.9	3.3	3.4	1.7	3.9	8.3*	-1.3	7.3	-0.3	-1.7
Urban fringe	2.0	0.0	0.3	-2.5	-0.1	-1.2	2.1	0.0	0.9	-4.3*
High metro	-1.6	1.8	-5.4*	3.5	1.0	7.8*	3.4	5.2	1.9	0.7
Region										
Southeast	1.4	-2.1	0.6	-1.1	0.5	-1.6	-0.1	-0.2	1.1	0.1
West	0.0	3.8	0.0	1.9	1.6	5.6	2.7*	4.1	-0.1	0.2
Central	-2.7*	-0.2	1.8	1.7	-0.9	3.5	0.4	2.7	0.2	0.7
Northeast	1.9*	-1.6	-2.3*	-2.6	-0.8	-7.2	-2.7*	-6.1	-0.9	-1.0

**Differences that are statistically significant ($p<.05$) because they are larger than two standard errors from the national percentage.*

EXHIBIT 16. Percentages Who Included Essential Bits of Information by Percentages Who Made Revisions Other Than Cosmetic Changes

	Made Revisions Other Than Cosmetic Changes	Did Not Make Revisions Other Than Cosmetic Changes
Requested redress, but did not explain situation	4.0%	4.7%
Explained situation and requested redress, but did not explain that the peaches were bought recently	38.6	25.7
Explained the situation, explained that the peaches were bought recently, and asked for redress	7.2	3.3
Included all five bits of information	4.6	1.4
Wrote a burlesque	5.8	3.7

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Revision is an integral part of the writing process, and most students — 60% of the 9-year-olds, 78% of the 13-year-olds and 68% of the 17-year-olds — attempted some type of revision. While revisions seldom improved the overall organization, radically changed the tone or added important facts, revisions did address other important aspects of the writing. At all three ages, students made more stylistic, informational and mechanical changes than any other type of revision. These three types — especially stylistic and informational revisions — became more pronounced at the 17-year-old levels. So a working definition of revision for many students seems to be substituting more appropriate words or phrases for preliminary attempts in the first draft, adding relevant and deleting irrelevant information, and attending to capitalization, punctuation and other mechanical conventions.

One notable deficiency clarified by these data is the lack of emphasis on overall organization, either in the original draft or in the revision. While there is no comparable information for 17-year-olds, the data show that most 13-year-olds jump from one briefly supported idea or set of related facts to the next with little or no transition. Revisions for both 13- and 17-year-olds, which concentrate on stylistic, informational and mechanical changes, seldom address the problems of organization or transition, although organization and transition are indeed essential to good writing.

Group Differences

Group differences on the revision exercises were often parallel to differences found in other learning areas, but there were some surprises. Unsurprising were the results that females tended to perform better on these exercises than males, whites better than blacks and those from well-educated families better than those whose parents had little formal education. A little surprising were the

regional differences: there were none to speak of. The differences by community type follow the typical pattern, but were surprisingly large, especially for 13-year-olds on the number of types of revision attempted. Differences between the high- and low-metro groups on these measures were sometimes greater than 20 percentage points. The following paragraphs present a more detailed overview of group differences from the national results.

Sex

While the differences were not unreasonably large, females tended to perform better on the revision exercises than did males. Nine-year-old girls organized the moon report more carefully and made more types of revision than did their male counterparts. However, the differences diminished for 13-year-olds. At both ages, girls were especially more likely to make stylistic, informational and organizational changes than were boys.

The same pattern held true for 17-year-olds. Girls presented more relevant information and made more types of revisions in their letters of complaint than did boys. Again, the greatest differences were found in stylistic, informational and organizational changes. Boys, according to stereotype, were more likely to write hostile letters, while girls were more likely to write factual, conciliatory or complex letters.

Race

Differences by race again were not startling. Nine- and 13-year-old whites demonstrated an advantage over blacks in organizing the moon report and making more types of revision. At the 9-year-old level, the data is more difficult to interpret because many blacks submitted papers that could not be scored because they were illegible, illiterate, on an entirely different subject or blank. The results show no significant difference at the 9-year-old level for making the various types of revision, but show that 13-year-old blacks are less likely to make stylistic, transitional, informational, mechanical or organizational changes than are their white counterparts.

On the letter of complaint, 17-year-old whites tended to present more relevant information and make more types of revisions than did their black counterparts. Blacks made fewer informational or stylistic changes, but more grammatical changes, than did whites. The tone of the letters for both groups was about the same, but blacks were slightly less likely to write conciliatory letters.

Parental Education

Results for 9- and 13-year-olds were consistent in demonstrating the advantage of the post-high-school group over the no-high-school group; intermediate parental-education groups tended to fall between these two extremes. Those whose parents had some formal education beyond high school wrote reports that were organized and made a greater variety of revisions than did those whose parents had less formal education. Nine-year-olds in the post-high-school group were especially likely to make more transitional and stylistic changes; and 13-year-olds were likely to make more stylistic, mechanical, cosmetic and informational changes than the nation as a whole.

At the 17-year-old level, differences were not as pronounced. Those in the post-high-school group were more likely to include essential bits of information in their letters of complaint, but there were no significant differences in the number of types of revision attempted. Tone for both extreme parental-education groups was about the same, except that those in the post-high-school group wrote slightly more conciliatory letters.

Community Type

Differences by community types, especially for the high- and low-metro groups,

were often large. Because few 9-year-olds successfully organized their reports, there were small differences at that age level in the ability to organize; but the differences became quite large by age 13, where low metro was below the nation as a whole and high metro was above the nation as a whole. A similar pattern exists in the number of types of revision attempted: the difference between high and low metro increased between 9- and 13-year-olds. Transitional, informational and mechanical revisions showed the greatest difference between the groups.

Differences by community type were not as extreme at the 17-year-old level. All groups included about the same amount of essential information (though the high-metro group was above the nation and the low-metro group below the nation in mentioning that the peaches were bought recently) and about the same number of types of revision. High-metro 17-year-olds were less likely to write factual and more likely to write conciliatory letters, while the low-metro group was more likely to write factual and less likely to write conciliatory letters. The high-metro group attempted fewer grammatical changes than the nation as a whole.

Region

Differences by region were much smaller than National Assessment has found in previous studies. There were no consistent patterns of differences by region in the overall organization of the moon report at either age. Differences by number of types of revision did exist, but these differences were small: 9-year-olds in the Northeast and Southeast attempted proportionally fewer types of revision, while those in the Central region attempted more; 13-year-olds in the Northeast attempted proportionally fewer types of revision, while those in the West attempted more. More 9-year-olds in the Southeast attempted organizational revisions than the nation as a whole, while fewer of their counterparts in the Northeast attempted such revisions. More Western 9-year-olds made informational changes than the nation as a whole. More 13-year-olds from the West made continuational changes, while fewer of those from the Central region made continuational changes than the nation as a whole.

On the letter of complaint, there were no regional differences in presenting bits of essential information or in the number of types of revision attempted; but more Northeastern and fewer Central 17-year-olds made cosmetic changes, while more Western 17-year-olds made transitional changes than the nation as a whole. Aside from fewer hostile letters from Southeastern 17-year-olds, there were no differences in the tone of the letters.

* U.S. Government Printing Office: 1977-779-864/222 Region 8